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ABSTRACT

This handbook is intended to provide some specific and practical suggestions for those involved in the education of adults. It is concerned with the ways that people learn as adults and with how teachers and tutors can help them learn more efficiently. The first of two main sections deals with adult learning and is concerned with the characteristics, expectations, and motives of adult learners. The second section, on preparation, planning, and teaching, deals with the whole business of helping adults learn within the context of an adult group or course. It looks at the main elements, including purposes (aims and objectives), methods (explaining, talks and lectures, demonstration, individual practice and supervision, working with groups, discussion, questions and questioning), learning resources, use of audiovisual aids, starting and finishing, evaluation (course, self, and student), policy and administration, and planning a session. Key points of each topic are highlighted in a separate "box." (YLB)

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ADULT LEARNING ADULT TEACHING

John Daines & Brian Graham

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DEPARTMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

ADULT LEARNING ADULT TEACHING

John Daines & Brian Graham

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PREFACE

This handbook is intended to provide some specific and practical suggestions for those involved in the education of adults. It is concerned with the ways that people learn as adults and with how teachers and tutors can help them learn more efficiently. The items are based upon material written by the authors on the short courses they run for adult education tutors and for the many other professional groups who now find themselves in the business of adult learning and teaching. It is hoped that the ideas and proposals included here will help tutors and group leaders to reflect upon and improve their practice to the benefit of the adults they work with.

There are two main sections:

SECTION A: ADULT LEARNING is concerned with the characteristics, expectations and motives of adult learners.

SECTION B: PREPARATION, PLANNING AND TEACHING is concerned with the whole business of helping adults learn within the context of an adult group or course. It looks at the main elements including purposes (aims and objectives), methods, evaluation and assessment together with some of the features of working with groups, resources and so on.

SECTION A
ADULT LEARNING

Introduction

Until quite recently, many people have assumed that adults continue to acquire new information and skills in much the same way that children do. However, as we discover more about how the brain works and investigate more closely what young people and adults actually do, it begins to look as if this view is over-simplistic. It is still too early to say whether adult learning differs qualitatively or quantitatively from that of children, though some believe this is the case. However, it does seem true that individual adults do have different learning styles; in all probability they pass through a number of developmental stages and some aspects of their memory performance may change with age. Whatever the exact nature of the differences, there can be little doubt that compared with children, adults bring a massive amount of acquired knowledge and experience to any new learning situation. They also possess considerable practical experience of the process of acquiring new knowledge, opinions and skills, though little of this will have taken place in a classroom or with the help of a tutor. For many people 'learning through experience', whereby they solve problems, acquire skills and develop understanding and knowledge in their own manner, is likely to be the preferred way of doing things. It follows that they are less likely to respond effectively to the formal teaching methods they endured at school.

It is not appropriate here to detail the psychological theories of learning and conditioning nor discuss current theories of adult learning in any detail. What may be of value, however, is to state some of the principles which can be drawn from our present understanding of adult learning processes, in so far as they have implications for the teacher of adults.

1. Learning in Adulthood

1. The view that once we arrive at biological maturity we reach a mental plateau and after a few years begin to deteriorate is no longer tenable. That is to say, given freedom from disease or injury, the brain remains fully functioning right through life.

2. The widespread belief that once adulthood is reached the potential for new learning decreases is also quite false. The adage 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks' is both misleading and inappropriate since older people so obviously can and do learn new things.

3. Some physical capabilities do decline with age – eg sensory abilities, physical strength, energy levels – but it is unlikely that such physiological losses have any significant effect upon learning potential.

4. Adults' motives for undertaking learning vary widely. Like children, they wish to gain, approval of others, to experience pleasure and to satisfy their curiosity. They also want to gain self-esteem, to employ what they have learnt, complete unfinished tasks, and achieve social and material benefits.

5. If people as learners discover that what they do is effective or valid, they will repeat it. If something proves rewarding, they will do it again and continue to do so until it no longer proves satisfying.

6. Some learning behaviour can be shaped. When an individual receives praise and reward for a particularly successful action, he or she will try again.

7. Adults bring a wide range of previous learning, knowledge and experience to a new situation. Learning is more likely to occur where new material can be related to what is already known. However, people require time to recognise relationships and to make the necessary connections.

8. Where new material conflicts with what is already known, learning of new material tends to be inhibited. Existing opinions and knowledge can interfere, making it more difficult to come to terms with and acquire new ideas and behaviour.

9. Emotional responses play a large part in how and when people learn. For example, emotional 'blocks' can inhibit learning, and anxiety about possible failure may prevent some individuals even from starting. Enjoyment and pleasure in what is being learnt will act as motivators.

10. There is a distinction between 'mere acquisition' of techniques and information, and learning which has personal meaning and relevance. Such 'significant learning' is likely to be more readily acquired than that which has little use or importance to individuals or to their lives.

KEY POINTS

☆ **THE ABILITY TO LEARN DOES NOT DECREASE WITH AGE.**

☆ **ADULT LEARNING POTENTIAL REQUIRES NEW MATERIAL TO BE RELEVANT, MEANINGFUL, INTERESTING AND USEFUL. LEARNING FOR LEARNING'S SAKE DOES NOT HAVE A HIGH PRIORITY FOR MANY PEOPLE.**

2. Adults as Learners

People come to adult education at widely varying ages and from varying backgrounds. They will be less alike than a class of children would be. Some of the ways in which the circumstances and learning processes of adult learners differ from those of school children are as follows:

1. Adults bring to their studies a considerable store of knowledge and experience gained over many years, much of which may be relevant to what is being learnt. They transfer life to learning and vice versa. Knowledge already gained is related to knowledge to be acquired. This transfer may be positive, where one helps and reinforces the new, or negative where one hinders and interferes with the other.

2. Adults inevitably bring a number of established habits of thought, prejudices, stereotypes, attitudes, beliefs and values. These identities interlock to make up the pattern of personality, the 'self'. Each individual is likely to have a good deal of emotional capital invested in this 'self' and will seek to defend its integrity.

3. Adults are people who have come to that stage in life when they are usually expected to assume responsibility for themselves. They are accustomed to setting their own goals and to establishing their own behaviour patterns. When they join a group they normally do so of their own volition and they may find the experience of being told what to do unfamiliar. They may also be older, more experienced and wiser than the tutor.

4. Though they may not have been in touch with formal education for some years they will nevertheless have learnt a great deal in the course of life since leaving school or college. Such learning is unlikely to be based upon general principles and theories, or have involved a great deal of abstract or symbolic thought. Adults will have had considerable experience of solving problems for themselves and dealing with concrete issues.

5. In some respects the processes of learning and memory will have changed. It will be more difficult to recall isolated facts or to learn by rote, particularly if the material is not immediately meaningful. On the other hand, since adults already know a great deal, they will have increased powers of comprehension and of organising material into meaningful wholes.

6. Adults are likely to lack confidence as learners, to under-estimate their own powers, and to be over-anxious and consequently reluctant to risk making mistakes. Anxiety can be a serious handicap for adult learners, particularly when they are put under pressure to complete a task in a limited time. Adults prefer to work at their own pace.

7. The time perspective of adults is different from that often imposed on children. Adults are not likely to be satisfied with learning as a process of preparation, the value of which will only be realised by the attainment of a distant objective some years hence. For them, the value of a course is predominantly immediate rather than long term. It needs to be relevant to their life and interests now rather than in the future. Nevertheless, they do recognise that they will not be able to acquire everything straightaway or always be successful on the first occasion they attempt something.

8. Adults' learning commitment is normally part-time. They often have to attend after a day's work and may not have much additional time to give to the course.

9. Adults may need the encouragement and support of others – the tutor and members of the group – to help them to use in their own time what they have acquired on the course.

KEY POINTS

☆ **ADULTS HAVE WIDE EXPERIENCE AND A KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD AND THEIR PLACE IN IT.**

☆ **DESPITE THIS EXPERIENCE ADULTS OFTEN LACK CONFIDENCE WHEN THEY RETURN 'TO THE CLASSROOM'. THEY MAY BECOME OVER-ANXIOUS AND DEPENDENT . . . AND NEED BOTH REASSURANCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT**

3. Adult Expectations

Adults usually possess a number of clearly defined expectations about their tutors and courses when they first enter adult education. Though their views and perspectives alter as a result of the learning they undertake, their expectations need to be taken into account when planning and teaching a session.

1. Adults expect to be taught in the 'old fashioned way', and many tend to be prisoners of their early educational experience. They will remember being 'talked at' in schools and may suspect that similar forceful and rigid methods are still in use. They may initially be rather taken aback by requests to participate actively in the group, to offer their own experiences and knowledge and to take responsibility for their own learning and performance. Initially they expect 'to be taught' rather than 'to learn'.

2. Adults expect the tutor to know the subject area under consideration. Adults do not anticipate that tutors will possess encyclopaedic knowledge and indeed they respect a tutor saying that he or she does not know the answer to a particular question. However, they do expect tutors to demonstrate a firm grasp of the subject material, whether they are giving a formal talk, demonstrating a skill or leading group discussion.

3. Adults expect the tutor to be a competent teacher and to employ the necessary teaching skills when working with a group. This implies that tutors should know about and be able to use a variety of teaching methods and approaches, as well as being familiar with common teaching aids. It also means that tutors need to manage the whole session competently, anticipating and coping with the difficulties which may arise within the group or the environment.

4. Adults expect the tutor to be a model of good practice. This implies that tutors need to be able to demonstrate the skills being learnt, embody the principles being espoused and cope with their own emotional reactions. In short, they need to 'practise what they preach'.

5. Adults expect to be made to work and to achieve something as a result of attending a course, and whilst they may complain about the effort they have to make, they do not expect it to be easy. Few adults attend for social reasons alone nor will they stay away if realistic demands are made of them. Nevertheless, they do need considerable help and encouragement from their tutors to help them achieve their personal goals.

6. Adults expect their adult status to be recognised. Quite properly, they expect to be treated with respect and dignity, on an adult course as elsewhere. They are more obviously vulnerable than children and will not put up with harsh criticism, humiliation, neglect or being patronised. On the other hand they do expect to be offered constructive criticism of their work and proper feedback on their performance and progress.

KEY POINTS

☆ **ADULTS EXPECT TUTORS TO APPROACH TEACHING IN A PROFESSIONAL MANNER.**

☆ **ADULTS EXPECT TO BE TREATED AS ADULTS.**

4. Adult Motivation

Adults come to courses for a variety of reasons. They do not always know what these are and even when they do, a few may not be able to articulate them clearly. On the other hand, some people are quite specific as to their reasons for joining.

1. Some common motives are:-
   In order to learn
   - to follow-up an existing interest
   - to learn a skill
   - to create something
   - to satisty curiosity
   - to discover "if I can"
   - to find general stimulation
   - to obtain qualifications
   - to learn new ideas or confirm existing ones

   For social reasons
   - to meet others
   - to have a (safe) evening out
   - to come with a friend
   - to meet old friends
   - to escape unhappiness, loneliness or boredom
   - to gain 'social' self-confidence

2. The needs people have for attending will determine their responses to the teacher and to the course.

3. Some tutors try to discover the needs and motives of their students by asking them to write them down or by questioning them in the group. However, the more informal approach of chatting to people and forming impressions from what they do and say can prove just as fruitful and is less threatening.

4. There may be a difference between the motives for attending and the motives for learning. Whilst tutors need to bear in mind people's social motives in the way they conduct the class, their principal concern should be to help students learn. To this end, each session should be organised and managed in ways which will help students develop their levels of skill and extend their knowledge, as well as make them feel at ease socially.

5. For many adults, there will inevitably be times when their motivation is low and they will feel discouraged. Membership of the group might not be as rewarding as first expected, parts of the course might be proving too difficult, or they might feel they are not being treated as adults. If tutors are therefore to maintain interest and keep levels of motivation high, a number of factors which can adversely affect the learning process need to be recognised. Some of these disincentives to learning are:

   - students' failure to achieve
   - a lack of friendly atmosphere
   - poor class organisation
   - the use of unnecessary jargon
   - a lack of individual attention
   - unrealistic goals
   - one student dominating the group
   - the tutor 'talking down' to people
   - an uncomfortable environment

6. If people are to maintain an optimum level of learning motivation they must first identify realistic goals which are within their capabilities and then experience success in attaining them. The tutor's tasks are to assist individuals, set appropriate goals and then to help each person achieve them.

7. It is evident that a tutor's personal style, commitment and enthusiasm are all major motivating factors in helping adults learn. Successful tutors are those who use participants' names, who show genuine interest and concern in student achievements and who praise and encourage when and where it is appropriate.

KEY POINTS

☆ **TUTORS NEED TO DISCOVER WHAT MOTIVES PEOPLE HAVE FOR ATTENDING, AND TO RECOGNISE THE IMPLICATIONS THESE WILL HAVE FOR SUBSEQUENT LEARNING.**

☆ **ACHIEVING SUCCESS WILL INCREASE MOTIVATION, WHICH IN TURN WILL LEAD TO FURTHER ACHIEVEMENT.**

5. Some Guidelines: People Learn Best When . . .

SAFETY
People learn best when they feel secure. Apprehension may produce results but it will also give rise to hostile feelings. Effective learning depends on being able to try things out in safety.

OBJECTIVES
People learn best when they know what it is they have to do and if they have been involved in setting their own goals.

NEEDS
People learn best when their needs are being met. They need to feel that they are respected and that their contributions are valued.

ACTIVITY
People learn best when they are actively involved. This does not mean that they must be jumping up and down all the time, but they should be engaged in an active process.

RELEVANCE
People learn best when what is being taught is relevant to their own experience. Totally new ideas are difficult to absorb, but if there is a clear point of contact then the process becomes easier.

ACHIEVEMENT
People learn best when and where they can see they are achieving something. The activities they undertake should be within their capabilities. However they do like to know how they are doing and some degree of tutor and/or group feedback is therefore essential.

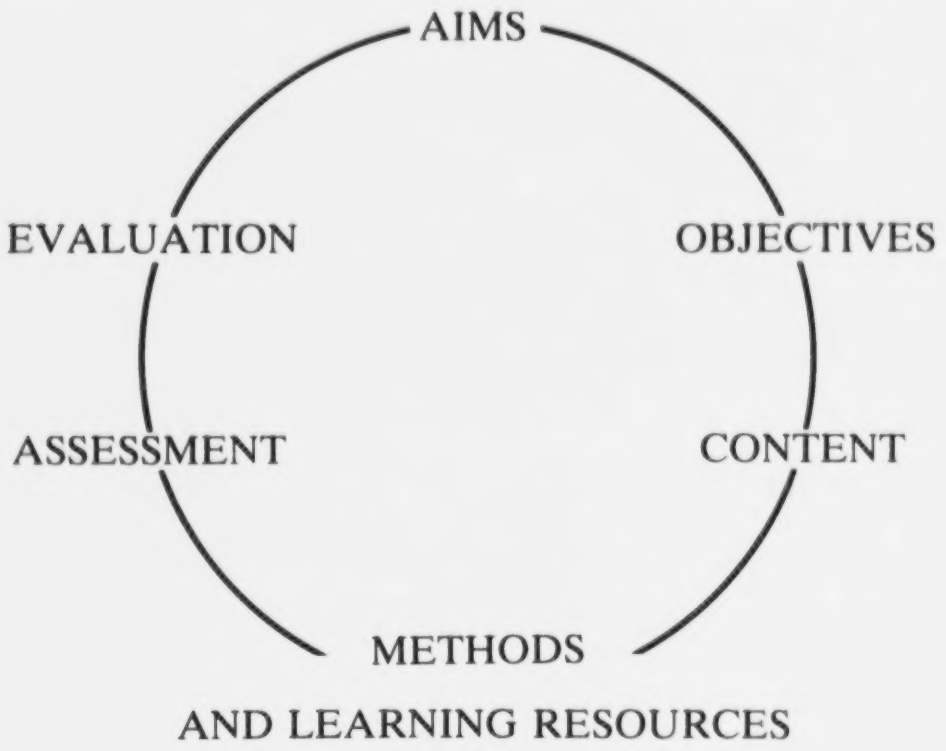
SECTION B

PREPARATION, PLANNING AND TEACHING

Introduction

It is evident to any teacher of adults that actual 'face to face' work is only part of the business of teaching. Planning and preparation is a necessary pre-requisite for any teaching/learning event, and evaluation is essential both during and after the event. There are no short cuts, and adult teachers who neglect to carry out these requirements invite classroom disaster. Tutors need to analyse what it is that people are to achieve and for what purpose and adult student's opinions are an important part of this process. From such analyses tutors will be able to identify what they will need to teach; what methods to employ and what equipment and materials to use. Examination of what took place in the session will indicate what the students actually achieved and the ways in which the session could be improved next time.

The elements of a session plan can be represented thus:



The following pages look at each in turn.

6. Aims and Objectives

A great deal has been written about aims and objectives in education over the years, though fortunately most of it need not concern us here. However, in planning any learning event some thought does need to be given to these two aspects as they are the means by which what is to be attempted and what students will achieve are specified. Unless both tutor and students are aware of what they are trying to do, neither can know how to set about doing it, let alone be in a position to decide whether they have achieved anything. Put at their simplest:

1. AIMS are statements of intent. They indicate the overall purpose(s) of a course or a session within a course, and they indicate what the teacher intends to do. Aims are normally general, often long-term and usually difficult to evaluate. Typically, they are expressed in phrases such as:

   - to impart information, knowledge, ideas
   - to improve understanding, skills, physical movement
   - to modify attitudes, beliefs, standards
   - to stimulate action
   - to encourage changes in behaviour

2. However carefully aims are written, they do not say what participants should be doing in a given session, nor what they should be learning and achieving at a particular moment. The 'down-to-earth', concrete statements which concentrate on such things – what course participants are actually to do – are known as objectives.

3. OBJECTIVES are specific action statements. They are the stepping-stones leading towards more general course aims. They state what the learner will be able to do, or say, or think, as a result of attending the course or session.

4. Because objectives are concerned with what people will be able to do, they are usually written in terms of behaviour that is observable. Typically they use 'action' verbs such as:

- identify	- state	- choose
- select	- move	- participate
- criticise	- perform	- compare
- show	- conclude	- demonstrate

5. When you set about identifying appropriate learning objectives for a particular session you will need to use behavioural terms and ensure that the statements you come up with are specific, limited in scope and achievable by your students.

6. An important feature of objectives is that they can be readily observed and assessed. Once you have established how successful participants have been in achieving the learning objectives specified, you will be able to decide what to do next: to move on to a new topic, give extra practice, or revise a particular aspect.

7. However you choose to write down your purposes for each session, you must at some point think about what you want your students to be able to do, say or think at the end of a session that they could not do before. Some of the objectives you have in mind may well be the same for several sessions, but until you identify the more important ones, you will be unable to plan a session, or teach it, or discover whether it was at all successful. Time spent thinking about these critical aspects and discussing them with your group will pay handsome dividends in terms of your session planning, your teaching and the learning and achievement of your students.

KEY POINTS

☆ **TO CLARIFY OBJECTIVES USE THE MENTAL PHRASE "BY THE END OF THE SESSION, THE STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO . . ." AVOID WORDS SUCH AS 'KNOW', 'UNDERSTAND', 'APPRECIATE', 'HAVE A GOOD GRASP OF'.**

☆ **SPECIFY OBJECTIVES SO THAT THEIR ACHIEVEMENT CAN SUBSEQUENTLY BE OBSERVED AND EVALUATED.**

7. Methods

There is no universal method of teaching. Talks, demonstrations, group work, films, discussion, etc can all be appropriate on occasion. What matters is to choose a method or methods to match the task in hand. Research into the effectiveness of teaching methods indicates that a combination of methods is likely to prove better than any one used singly. A variety of methods helps maintain interest and motivation. An imaginative choice of teaching methods and efficient implementation and management allows people to participate in a whole range of activities – listening, looking, talking and doing – and this will facilitate their learning.

1. When you start to plan and prepare a session you will need to make decisions about the methods that can best be employed to:

   - meet the identified objectives
   - handle the content you want to deal with
   - suit the nature of the group and the individuals who comprise it
   - utilise the resources you have available
   - fit the environment

   You might wish to use some combination of the following:

☆ **Presentation**
A lecture/talk
Lecture/talk with group participation
Debate

☆ **Demonstration**
Showing
'Do it with me'
Coaching

☆ **Individual Learning**
Individual practice
Task and activities
Reading
'Homework' (work between classes)
Diary

☆ **Group Learning**
Problem solving group
Group tasks and activities
Discussion
Negotiation
Question and Answer
Skills practice
Brainstorming
Buzz groups
Visits and field trips
Projects

☆ **Structured Experience**
Role playing
Simulation
Case Study
Games

2. The methods and learning resources noted here represent a very wide range of possibilities. To help you make appropriate decisions, you should ask yourself:

   - What methods can I use which will motivate and encourage my students to learn?
   - Are these methods appropriate for what I want to teach?
   - Will they suit the members of this particular group?
   - Will they be effective in helping members of this group learn and achieve?
   - Do these methods take into account the factors which affect adult learning?
   - What can I do to ensure they will be effective?
   - What are the specific management issues which will arise from using these methods with this particular group?
   - Have I the necessary skills to implement and manage them?
   - Am I happy to use these methods? Do they suit my own style of teaching?
   - Have I asked the group which methods are best?

3. There may be a number of core methods which are of pre-eminent value in your teaching. These methods may partly be determined by the structure and content of your subject, and partly by the fact that they are particularly effective in helping adults learn and achieve. The following paragraphs cover the more important features of some of these core methods. Some notes about 'additional' methods are provided separately in a table at the end.

7a. Explaining

Explaining is a crucial teaching process which underlies lectures, talks, demonstrations and other forms of teacher presentations. It is also the process most often used when tutors respond to students' direct requests for help or information or when they provide constructive feedback to individuals.

1. Explaining is giving understanding to another person. To do this the explainer must know what he or she is trying to explain whilst taking due account of the person(s) who is listening. There are three main types of explanation – the 'interpretative', the 'descriptive' and the 'reason-giving' – approximating to the questions 'What?', 'How?' and 'Why?'. These different types may be used singly, or in some combination, and employed with large groups, small groups or individuals.

2. To be effective, an explanation must be at the right level for, and must be understood by the listener. It should also include some important characteristics such as:

– clarity	– emphasis of important points
– interest	– statements to link key points
– relevance	– involvement of listeners
– logical organisation	– appropriate examples
– enthusiasm	– clear diagrams
– short sentences	– appropriate aids

3. People's most common complaints about the explanations given by tutors are:

– talking too fast	– too much information
– confusing	– boring
– disorganised	– condescending
– poor audio-visual aids	– no participation

4. The suggestions which follow refer predominantly to the structure and design of explanations rather than to the process of actually giving an explanation.

☆ The most straightforward approach to designing an explanation is to use an opening 'lead-in' (or orientation), a set of key points and a summary.

☆ The *opening* of an explanation should gain and hold attention right from the start. You need to motivate the listeners as well as inform them, so devise a 'lead-in' which will both capture their interest and be relevant to what you want to explain. Some tutors begin with an unambiguous statement of the question or problem to be explained. Alternatively, you could start with:
- a reference to the listeners' experience (or to yourself)
- a question
- a brief anecdote or joke.
- an unusual object or picture.

☆ The *key points* are the important points that make up your explanation. Explain each in turn, avoiding technical terms and complex sentences. Use one or more examples or illustrations that are brief, unambiguous, and recognisable to your listeners.

There are four major tactics which will help people follow an explanation, and you should try to use them. What they are actually called is not particularly important the tactics themselves are:

☆ Signposts. These are statements which indicate the structure and direction of an explanation:
"I want to deal briefly with fibre. First, I want to outline what it is; second, where it occurs naturally; third, to examine in what ways it is of benefit to us."

☆ Frames. These are statements which indicate the beginning and end of a subtopic.
"So those are the main ingredients. Let's now look at how they can be combined."
Framing statements are particularly important in complex explanation which may involve topics, subtopics and even subtopics of subtopics.

☆ Foci. These are statements and emphases which highlight the key points of an explanation:
"So the main point is . . . :"
"Now this is very important . . ."

☆ Links. These are words, phrases or statements which link one part of an explanation to another part:
"So you can see that the French had quite a different concept of colonialism. This begins to explain their reactions to . . ."

☆ The *summary* is a restatement of the important key points. You should not introduce new ideas at this stage though you may use other words to rehearse what you have already said. The way you link the keys together should lead directly to a conclusion, the answer to the problem or question you posed first. Useful openings are:
"To sum up then . . . ", "Let's just look at the main points we've talked about . . . ".

One of the difficulties faced by many tutors is that they want to tell their students everything that they know about the topic being explained. This is understandable, especially when it is a 'pet subject' and where the tutor is pleased that someone is interested. However, it is to be avoided. When you are giving an explanation to a group or to an individual:

- ☆ Make sure that you say only that which is relevant to the question in hand and that you tell people only that which they need to know at that particular point.
- ☆ Establish as far as you can what they already know about the topic. Avoid lengthy explanation about something that everyone already knows more about than you do.
- ☆ Rethink your topic from the adult listeners' point of view. If they do not have your specialist background, knowledge and experience, how much do they need to know about the topic . . . and at what level . . . and in what order?
- ☆ Take care not to assume too much of your listeners. The more knowledgeable you are about a subject, the more likely you are to assume that your listeners can see the 'obvious connections' and be able to fill in the minor linking explanations you omitted.
- ☆ Check that your listeners comprehend what you are explaining. Ask them, look at them; perhaps put in the odd question, rhetorical as well as real, to see if they are following you.
- ☆ Use concrete examples. Relate new ideas to *their* experience.
- ☆ Make full use of graphics and other audio/visual materials to illustrate and enhance your explanations and their understanding.

KEY POINTS

- ☆ **EXPLAINING IS AT THE HEART OF TEACHING, JUST AS UNDERSTANDING IS AT THE HEART OF LEARNING. IT IS THE PROCESS WHICH UNDERLIES LECTURING, GIVING TALKS AND INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION.**
- ☆ **EXPLAINING IS NOT SIMPLY AN UNINTERRUPTED TEACHER MONOLOGUE. IT CAN BECOME PART OF A SEQUENCE OF GROUP ACTIVITIES OR INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION TASKS; IT CAN PREFACE A DISCUSSION OR FORM THE FINALE OF SOME MAJOR CLASS ACTIVITY. ITS PURPOSE IS TO PROVIDE LEARNERS WITH INFORMATION AND UNDERSTANDING IN AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT MANNER.**

7b. Talks and Lectures

There is a belief in adult education that the presentation of knowledge in a talk or lecture is in some way improper and demeans those who listen. This is to be deplored. We have all learnt and will continue to learn much from listening to presentations of this sort.

1. Talks and lectures are an efficient way of providing people with information and ideas within a specific period of time. The speaker is able to organise and structure the knowledge he or she possesses and to offer it to others for their immediate consideration. The speaker can develop an argument, outline a field of knowledge, summarise a topic, pose pertinent questions and highlight relevant issues for the benefit of the listener. Given that the latter is mentally active, involved, and interested, then a lecture/talk can be a very effective method.

2. The business of giving talks and lectures involves a number of important processes:

☆ New material should relate in some way to what the listener already knows. It is much easier to understand and learn more about something that is already familiar than to tackle a topic which *is* new, bearing no relation to existing knowledge. Where the topic is quite new, the skill of the lecturer is to draw upon analogies and examples that will form bridges between what is already known and what is not.

☆ How much material people are able to retain as a result of listening to another will also depend upon how interested and motivated they are. Obviously the listener must attend to what is being presented but the evidence is that people go off into 'micro-sleeps'. Attention can wander after 20 minutes or so of sustained listening. However, those who actively manipulate the ideas and information presented to them – thinking about the point just made, looking to see what underlies it, working out how the argument will develop, extracting the principle, examining the relationships between ideas – are much more likely to learn and remember what they hear than are those who sit passively letting the words wash over them.

☆ Learning is not something that a tutor can do for an adult student; it is something that the learner must do for him or herself. In the case of a lecture or talk, the speaker presents material in a structured way which allows the learner to think and learn in a meaningful and logical manner.

☆ It follows that the job of the lecturer or tutor giving a talk, however short, calls for preparation and skill. The tutor must aim for clarity and interest in the way that the material is structured and in the manner in which it is delivered. If the tutor is unintelligible and boring with complex and esoteric material, people cannot be expected to listen, let alone learn.

3. Though there are a number of ways that a talk or lecture can be structured each makes use of the principles of explaining and requires an orientation or lead-in, a set of key points and a summary both for the talk as a whole and for major sections within the talk. An explanation of these three features, together with some guidelines, are to be found in the section on Explaining. What follows here are some suggestions for actually giving a talk. Applying some of them to your presentation will enhance your listeners' interest and your teaching effectiveness in helping them to learn.

4. The following are important communication skills:

☆ Speak clearly and directly to people. This does not mean you have to develop a new voice or a different accent. Talk naturally at a pace to suit your listeners. Use pauses and silences as well as altering the tone and pitch of your voice to emphasise what you say.

☆ Effective presentation is about open communication. Look directly at people. Try not to fix your eyes on the ceiling, or your notes, or the clock!

☆ Movement can sustain people's attention. Make use of the space between yourself and the group. Avoid becoming frozen to the same spot but don't take marathon walks.

☆ Gestures are quite acceptable to the vast majority of people and help underline what you say. Your personal mannerisms are part of you and unless they are gross they will not be of much consequence to your listeners; they might even prove endearing!

☆ Avoid using language which is above your students' heads.

☆ Look at members of the group and watch their reactions. Change your approach or modify what you intend to do if you think it is warranted.

☆ People respond to speakers who appear warm, enthusiastic and stimulating.

5. And some other techniques:

☆ People find it difficult to concentrate for long periods of time. Therefore combine your talk with other 'sub-methods'. Use buzz groups between partners, give simple individual tasks to provide breaks in your speech, provide an opportunity for them to change their sitting position, use visual aids, give out handouts.

☆ Constantly use the experience of members of the group. Asking people to indicate their personal experience or response to a point by a show of hands is a minimal way of working. Asking for individual contributions, questions or observations from members of the group involves them more actively.

☆ Don't give everything away. It is worth encouraging people to draw their own conclusions and come up with the principles involved rather than simply telling them. Pose a question and give them time to think, encourage them to work out a solution with a partner or ask them to suggest to you what the answer might be. If they have to struggle a bit mentally, that is no bad thing.

☆ Think out your examples and illustrations carefully before you begin: don't hope that they will come to you on the spur of the moment. People like to hear of examples from areas with which they are familiar. The more telling and meaningful your illustration, the more likely people are to remember the ideas to which they relate.

6. The suggestions given above refer to a talk or lecture where the level of active group participation is at a minimum. This might be appropriate where the group is very large, where there are constraints of time or content, or when the speaker judges that a period of quiet listening and reflection is required. However, where you have greater freedom, consider the following:

☆ Instead of presenting a talk first, followed by some form of group interaction – questions, a small group task, a practical activity – reverse the procedure. You can then draw upon their observations and tentative solutions in your subsequent discourse.

☆ An alternative is to construct a sequence where the tutor's input is interspersed with individual and group activities all building towards the overall learning objective. A number of variations are possible but some examples might be:

A	B	C
Tutor talk	Group activity	Introduction
Buzz groups	Brain storm	Video
Tutor talk	Tutor talk	Tutor talk
Comment on	Individual activity	Review video
slides/pictures	Small group	Small group
Tutor talk	collaboration	analysis
	Tutor talk	Plenary feedback

In each instance the tutor's presentation method holds the subsidiary methods together. This emphasis upon the speaker as presenter is a different procedure from where the tutor simply summarises the outcomes of a group activity such as role play or a formal group discussion.

The 'Lecture/Talk with Group Participation' just described employs all the principles of explaining and many of the suggestions given above. As a method, it emphasizes that:

- the listeners are more actively involved physically
- they are required to contribute and participate more
- they experience greater variety of opinion and information
- by interacting with others they have a chance to seek clarification of their own ideas.

Nevertheless the tutor's presentation remains the core method, even though he or she is better able to relate the material to people's own experience and, through their active involvement, help them integrate the new information with what they already know.

KEY POINTS

☆ **WHEN STUDENTS ARE CHALLENGED NOT SIMPLY TO LISTEN BUT TO CHOOSE AND JUDGE, MANIPULATE IDEAS AND THINK, THEY ARE PUT INTO AN EFFECTIVE POSITION TO LEARN.**

☆ **CLARITY, INTEREST AND MEANING ARE THE THREE VIRTUES OF GIVING TALKS AND LECTURES.**

7c. Demonstration

All practical activities require that students receive careful instruction, followed by guidance and feedback. Common sense determines that people will learn best from a combination of seeing and hearing rather than either in isolation. Thus any demonstration should:

- state the activity involved and indicate its purpose(s)
- arouse and maintain students' interest
- reveal the main steps of the activity and identify the likely problem areas, visually and aurally
- inspire confidence in students so that they are willing to 'have a go'
- be so timed that there is opportunity for students to undertake individual practice afterwards
- allow opportunities for feedback to students about their performance

1. **Preparation**

Before undertaking a demonstration you will need to be clear in your own mind what you are going to demonstrate. Therefore:

☆ Identify the crucial steps of the activity and break it down into the basic steps or movements. Remember that what is easy and comprehensible for you will be much less so for your students. Strive to simplify it.

☆ Prepare any teaching aids that will help students understand what is involved. Diagrams or models may well be helpful in addition to anything you may physically be able to show them.

2. **Carrying out the Demonstration**

Before commencing the demonstration you should describe what you intend to do and why. Then:

☆ Make sure everyone can see as well as hear you. There is nothing wrong with a raised position – a dais, stage or table if *you* feel comfortable there. Depending upon what you are demonstrating, you could change your position in the room at some point so that you are nearer those who were previously 'at the back'. Speak clearly and distinctly.

☆ Run through the complete activity first so that students know what they are aiming to do.

☆ Accompany each step of your activity with a verbal description.

☆ Language is important. Remember that you will probably be facing the class so that *your* left is *their* right. Use words they understand to describe what you are doing.

☆ Adjust the speed of your movements to suit your students, especially if they are watching and then copying, i.e. the 'do it with me' type of demonstration. Watch for their responses and actions and alter your pace accordingly.

☆ Try not to be over-absorbed in your own demonstration. You are trying to show them how to do it, not giving a royal command performance! Don't try to impress people, for you will rob them of their self-confidence when they come to do it.

3. **After the Demonstration**

Once you have finished demonstrating, you will need to check that the process has been fully understood. There are a number of ways of doing this:

☆ Ask students to check with one another that they know what to do, perhaps by showing each other.

☆ Ask if there are any points they are not sure of and if they want you to go over anything again.

☆ Ask students to recap the main points of the activity. Asking them to verbalise the process will help reinforce their learning.

'Individual Practice and Supervision' is another core method and it is considered in some detail below. In the context of demonstration however, your observations and assessment of people's attempts to carry out the activity you demonstrated is the best test of whether they have understood. On the basis of what you see them do, and your assessment of their proficiency both as individuals and as a group:

- ☆ Decide whether to repeat the demonstration so that everyone can recognise the 'finer points'.
- ☆ Decide whether to ask a more competent member of the group to demonstrate whilst you comment on what he or she is doing as a means of reinforcing what you yourself did.
- ☆ Decide whether to complete this particular part of the session by a simple informal discussion on what the group finds easy, hard, fun, impossible . . . !
- ☆ End with a word of encouragement to help people to carry on on their own.

KEY POINTS

- ☆ **PREPARE FOR YOUR DEMONSTRATION BY BREAKING IT DOWN INTO APPROPRIATE STAGES FOR THE OBSERVERS TO WATCH.**
- ☆ **CHECK OFTEN THAT PEOPLE CAN SEE WHAT YOU ARE DOING, AND UNDERSTAND HOW EACH PART FITS INTO THE WHOLE.**

7d. Individual Practice and Supervision

Psychologists have no need to tell us that the opportunity to practise a new skill or action and use a new idea or faculty improves performance. We all know that . . . "practice makes perfect"! Similarly, we all know that that when people receive a reward for what they do, they are more likely to repeat it. This is true whether they are given verbal praise, a more tangible reward or they achieve 'their own success'. These common sense ideas underlie much adult learning and behaviour and provide vital clues for working with adults.

1. People need to practise new skills in order to achieve a positive and beneficial result. Therefore, in providing your course members with the opportunity for individual practice, you should:

☆ Plan specific times during the session when individual practice is to be undertaken.

☆ Arrange the environment with care. If it means changing rooms, moving furniture, sweeping floors, altering the ventilation, lighting or heating, then do so. Ideally, such things should be done before students arrive but reality may dictate otherwise. Negotiate with the group and devise a procedure where all 'knuckle down' to prepare the setting together.

☆ Participants should know exactly what they are to do. Even where practice follows directly on a demonstration you should specify clearly that now you want individuals to do 'X' or 'Y' in 'this' manner for 'that' purpose.

☆ Instill some enthusiasm into the proceedings and emphasise the benefits that can accrue.

☆ Try to ensure that people are employing the correct procedure right from the start.

☆ Organise things so that opportunities for competition are minimal for there may be some individuals 'who want to be best'. Talking with the group about it will help and so will positioning people in the room, but one or two may still need a gentle, private word from you.

2. And when supervising:

☆ Observe and listen to each person in order to diagnose what they are doing. Make an assessment in terms of their own previous performance and the nature and difficulty of the new activity.

☆ Allocate your time fairly between individuals. Adults don't expect equal time every session, but they do expect you to be fair overall.

☆ Guard against giving all your attention to the pushy student, or the good one, or the nice one, at the expense of the lost souls or the less articulate.

☆ Be conscious of the group as a whole, even when you are dealing with one person at a time. If you see people requiring assistance tell them "I'll be with you in a moment". Listen to what is going on around you in case students are bored, mystified, or giving each other the wrong advice.

☆ Be encouraging, and praise people for what they are doing or trying to do. Give specific guidelines rather than vague assurances.

☆ Ensure that when people begin, they have an achievable objective in mind.

3. The whole purpose of an individual practising any activity is to do it more efficiently and effectively. When and where people begin to experience positive effects, their achievement will spur them to further success. Until they do, you will need to reward and reinforce their attempts. Here are some words you might use:

FORTY-NINE WAYS TO SAY "VERY GOOD"

1. I like that
2. That's RIGHT!!!
3. That's the way!
4. You're doing fine!
5. Nice going!
6. That's coming along nicely!
7. That's great
8. TERRIFIC!
9. GOOD WORK!
10. That's better
11. EXCELLENT!
12. That's the best you have ever done
13. Good going!
14. Keep it up!
15. That's really nice
16. Keep up the good work
17. Much better!
18. Good for you!
19. That's very much better!
20. Exactly right!
21. That's a good idea. I like that.
22. You are doing that much better today
23. Superb!
24. I knew you could do it
25. Keep working on it, you're getting better
26. You're really working hard today
27. You're doing beatifully
28. That's it
29. That's good
30. That's the right way to do it
31. You are really learning a lot
32. That's better than ever
33. FINE!
34. Now that IS good. Well done.
35. You remembered!
36. You're really improving
37. I think you've got it now
38. Well look at you!
39. TREMENDOUS
40. I DO like that
41. Now that's what I call a fine job
42. You did that very well
43. CONGRATULATIONS!
44. That was first class work
45. Well done
46. You've just about mastered that
47. One more time and you'll have it
48. You must have been practising
49. GREAT!

KEY POINTS

☆ **PEOPLE WILL NEED SPECIFIC ENCOURAGEMENT AND REWARD FROM YOU, THE TEACHER. BE FORTHCOMING WITH YOUR PRAISE WITHOUT BEING FULSOME.**

☆ **COMPETITION IS TO BE AVOIDED BUT THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH IDENTIFYING SOMEONE DOING IT WELL, OR TRYING HARD, OR ENJOYING IT, FOR THE GENERAL BENEFIT OF ALL!**

7e. Working with Groups

A group is essentially a set of people who interact together. It follows that the critical feature is not so much the number of people involved but rather the processes which take place amongst them. Whilst it is unlikely that more than twenty or so people would be able to form a single effective group, it remains the task of the tutor or leader to create a climate in which interaction can flourish however many individuals are present.

1. The difference between a class of adult students and a group made up of the same individuals is that, as the latter, they will actively relate to and learn from each other as well as from the tutor. Being part of a group satisfies the need for a sense of belonging, for giving and receiving attention from others, for being favourably regarded by others, for feeling secure, and for being stimulated by others.

2. Groups can produce more varied and stimulating ideas than can individuals working alone. Groups can provide a supportive atmosphere for individual practice, experiment and innovation, and help people reconsider and modify their attitudes.

3. Although groups provide an atmosphere in which such processes can take place, this does not mean that the tutor no longer has a teaching function. The relationships built up within a group allow individuals to participate more actively and willingly in learning tasks and activities, freeing the tutor from the necessity of simply working with an established group means that the tutor and the group can use the whole variety of adult learning and teaching methods, though it is the tutor's responsibility to organise and manage these activities.

4. However, there are a number of issues which have to be resolved when working with groups. These include coping with dominant (and silent) group members, the embarrassment of self-disclosure, styles of group leadership, the (subsequent) reluctance of members to use more individual learning methods, loss of task direction, over-concern with the emotional/social aspects of the group at the expense of individual learning and achievement. In each case the tutor and the group need to be clear about what is involved and what the implications are.

5. Tutors use small group teaching in many different ways. Individual sessions may range from short inputs by the tutor (or individual students) to open-ended discussion on particular topics. In between these extremes are a variety of methods, each of which will require the tutor to prepare for the session thoroughly, to prepare students to learn, and to manage the group during the session itself. Group work is a great deal more than a general discussion that simply requires a tutor to choose a topic for people to talk about.

6. There will be occasions when it is appropriate for the members of the group to work in smaller sub-groups and other occasions when it may be appropriate for them to work together as a large group. In either situation the tutor's task will include the following:

Controlling	– setting the task, giving information, keeping things 'on target'.
Advising	– giving information and suggestions when asked to.
Facilitating	– encouraging participation and discussion.
Participating	– making unobtrusive contributions where appropriate.
Withdrawing	– leaving the group(s) to work on its own if it is appropriate.
Monitoring	– checking that the group(s) is working in suitable directions.
Summarising	– collecting in the main points from the group(s), linking one to the other, summarising the findings.

7. Every tutor has his or her own style of small group teaching. Two tutors may be considering the same topic, using the same method and the same set of skills, yet the flavour of their teaching may be very different. The reasons are that within small group teaching there are interactions between the personality of the tutor, the method, the topic, the personalities of the students and their ways of working and thinking. It is difficult to characterise small group teaching styles precisely, though most include the three dimensions:

Directive	————	Free
Cold, aloof	————	Warm, supportive
Boring	————	Stimulating

Extremes of any of these dimensions are unlikely to be effective. Too much stimulation is likely to threaten or swamp the group. Too much warmth may produce cosiness and little learning. Too much freedom and people will feel insecure and lose their sense of direction.

It follows from what has been said that small group teaching is not a soft option; indeed, many experienced teachers of adults find it much more demanding than formal approaches. Working with groups requires careful planning, management and evaluation. It calls upon the whole range of teaching skills and requires significant attention to detail as well as an awareness of the interpersonal and cognitive processes that can take place. Most important of all, each small group session should have clearly defined aims and objectives.

KEY POINTS

- ☆ **A GROUP DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN. AS THE TUTOR, ENSURE YOU FACILITATE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEOPLE RIGHT FROM THE START, IN WAYS WHICH WON'T SEEM EMBARRASSING OR STRANGE TO YOUR STUDENTS.**
- ☆ **GROUP WORK IS SOMETHING MUCH MORE THAN SITTING IN A CIRCLE DISCUSSING – THIS USUALLY ENDS UP AS POOLED IGNORANCE. PLAN, MANAGE AND ASSESS EVERY SESSION AND MODIFY WHAT YOU DID FOR ANOTHER TIME TO MAKE IT MORE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT.**

7f. Discussion

The term 'discussion' is much misused in adult education circles. It has been applied variously to cover all small group learning activities, any method that involves student participation, and any occasion when two or more people talk together in a classroom!

Dialogues and discussion often take place spontaneously between students and between students and tutors as part of other activities – during a demonstration or a talk, during a simulation exercise or as part of a problem-solving task – but in these contexts such discussion is not a method. Rather it is the way we communicate with each other about what is happening.

1. The definition of the word 'to discuss' is 'to examine by debate or argument, to reason' and it is this concept which describes discussion *as a method*. Thus discussion is where a group of people jointly explore a topic, an area of knowledge or a set of attitudes. It is a planned for, and managed event, usually preceded by a specific task or activity acting as a stimulus, and it requires a clear aim and a set of objectives. It follows from this that purposeful discussion rarely happens spontaneously in a group without the tutor doing something rather more than simply suggesting it should should take place.

2. One of the most enjoyable features for many students attending an adult course is meeting other people and talking over problems and experiences. In this sense, individual learning can result from a shared experience, and the discussion method is based upon the assumption that we can learn from each other in this way. Indeed, the concept of learning through co-operation is stressed more through discussion than through any other method, for here the participative process may be at its most effective.

3. There is good evidence that group processes can be effective in modifying people's attitudes, particularly where a group tutor or leader is also recognised to be a 'credible communicator'. Where people are presented with new ideas or beliefs that are contrary to their previous experience, it appears easier to modify their attitudes within the social context of a group than where they are individual members of a passive audience. Discussion within a group can enable individual adults to gain self-confidence in themselves and in their own opinions.

4. Discussion also appears useful in helping participants arrive at a clearer understanding of a topic, whether or not they subsequently modify their behaviour as a result. The opportunity to explore ideas in a safe and secure setting allows people to reconsider their misconceptions and misunderstandings, confirm what they may already correctly know, and acquire new ideas and opinions. But the method does have limitations.

☆ The tutor needs to be aware that many adults do not find it easy to participate in open group discussions and indeed some may be averse to the whole idea. They may prefer to be 'taught' and thus will need sympathetic encouragement if they are to participate and learn within a group setting.

☆ Although relatively informal discussion can promote learning and attitude change, it is not in itself a very effective way of presenting information, and without a core of received knowledge, beneficial attitude change is unlikely to take place. Thus, to be effective, the tutor must teach, guide and encourage adult students to the point where they can actively participate in such learning.

5. The following points suggest how to set about preparing and managing discussion:

☆ Determine the objectives of the particular discussion. What is each individual to be able to do, or think, or say as a result of taking part? Make it clear to the group what the specific purposes are.

☆ Where possible, identify the topic to be discussed sometime before so that students will know what they will be talking about. If the discussion is to follow on from a talk, a film, or demonstration, then decide upon the specific theme(s) you want to consider and pose definite questions to structure the subsequent conversation. Alternatively, plan a task or activity which people can begin with, working in small groups of twos, threes or fours. Whichever way you do it, you will need to provide a structure and a starting point to overcome misunderstandings and the fact that people need an orientation period.

☆ Groups need to be large enough to include a variety of views, opinions and experience, yet small enough to allow each individual to feel that they can make a contribution. With a course group as large as 20, it would help if you

11d Student Assessment

1. The most important outcome of any course is the achievement of people in the group. Are they achieving the agreed aims and objectives? It may be quite inappropriate in your course to subject students to any formal assessment by way of an examination or test. You must therefore depend upon informal procedures such as listening, observing and assessing performance during practical sessions and during group learning activities. Knowing about their achievement will tell you about how successful you have been in running the course and helping them learn. It will also tell you that there are particular areas where you can be of more help to each individual and help guide you to a position where you can provide that help.

2. Here are some suggestions for when you make informal assessments of individuals and their achievements:

- Give people your full attention
- Remember their names
- Make eye to eye contact
- Smile and look friendly
- Find out what the student thinks first
- Listen and observe
- Praise and reward all the good aspects
- Restrict your criticisms to a few main points
- Use language that they understand
- Relate your assessment to the individual's previous work, rather than that of the group
- Express high, though achievable expectations
- Be specific in any guidance and advice you offer
- Identify one or perhaps two aspects for the student to work at
- Finish on a positive point
- Find an opportunity to reassess and give further feedback
- Care about your students and what they do

KEY POINTS

☆ **COURSE EVALUATION AND STUDENT ASSESSMENT ARE AS CRUCIAL TO THE TEACHING PROCESS AS ARE PREPARATION AND PLANNING. YOU NEED TO KNOW WHETHER COURSE AIMS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES ARE BEING ATTAINED.**

☆ **SELF-EVALUATION DOESN'T REQUIRE A SPECIFIC TIME OR PLACE. IT SHOULD BE A REGULAR AND PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY.**

broke into two or more smaller groups, at least to start with. This will encourage the less confident and draw upon everyone's point of view. You can combine the groups later in the session and attempt to summarise the ideas and opinions that have emerged.

☆ There is no optimum period of time for a discussion. It depends upon the topic, the group and how much time is available. When you prepare the session, decide how much time you think should be devoted to the topic and try to keep to it.

☆ Get the environment right. To facilitate the free flow of ideas among people, arrange the furniture in an informal way – a circle or closed 'U' shape. Get people comfortably seated; avoid having people sitting (or hiding) behind each other.

6. You will need to actively manage what is going on and support, guide and encourage members of the group. Thus:

☆ Make selective use of questions to encourage quieter people to contribute. Don't pressurise anyone, but give them the opportunity to contribute. Ensure that no one individual dominates the proceedings.

☆ Silences do not have to be filled. People need time to absorb and reflect upon what has just been said by others.

☆ Treat all viewpoints with respect – even though you might disagree with certain comments or find it hard to accept the attitudes of some individuals. If you show obvious disapproval you could end up alienating a section of the group.

☆ One of your main functions, once members of the group are actively participating, is to keep them focused upon the topic and to help them avoid too many 'red herrings'. You will need to ensure that contributions are relevant and purposeful. Therefore, you should:

- clarify vague or confusing remarks
- challenge obvious misconceptions and wrong ideas if others don't do so
- check that everyone understands what is being said
- encourage contributors to support their unsubstantiated statements, especially where they show clear prejudice and overly rigid attitudes
- note down the important points so that you can refer to them later

7. Discussions can easily fade away at the end of a session, though on some occasions people become so enthusiastic and interested it seems impossible to stop. Thus, you need to make sure that you:

☆ Call a halt to the proceedings at the right moment. This could be at a point when conversation is beginning to flag, or at a 'natural break' in the enthusiasm.

☆ Summarise what has been discussed, reviewing the main points. (Consider making a written summary as a handout for the group. One of the group might be willing to do it if you have given him or her some prior warning).

☆ Thank people for having taken part, and find time afterwards to speak to anyone who has made a particularly useful contribution, or who participated for the first time, or who has been quiet. Encourage individuals to say what they have got out of the session.

☆ Once on your own, evaluate what has been achieved. Consider which individuals have learnt something, or changed their attitudes, or become more confident as a result of the session.

KEY POINTS

☆ **DISCUSSION IS A SPECIFIC, SMALL GROUP METHOD SERVING PARTICULAR PURPOSES.**

☆ **DISCUSSION IS A PLANNED FOR, AND MANAGED PROCEDURE. IT REQUIRES ALL A TUTOR'S ORGANISATIONAL AND TEACHING SKILLS FOR IT TO FUNCTION EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY.**

7g. Questions and Questioning

Getting students in adult classes to think for themselves can be a challenging task for the tutor. They must be given time for reflection in situations in which they feel safe. Moreover they must feel secure enough to disclose their thoughts. Working in pairs or in small groups can help individuals feel less threatened and the use of specific tasks and activities can help them think. So too can the use of carefully chosen questions.

1. Questions are statements intended to evoke verbal responses from individuals. They can serve a number of purposes including:

   - stimulating interest, motivation and curiosity
   - using individual student's knowledge for the benefit of others
   - checking and assessing levels of understanding
   - focusing thinking
   - developing and stimulating logical and critical thought
   - developing self-expression of thought and of feelings
   - encouraging communication between group members
   - involving individuals and adding variety

2. There are several ways of classifying questions. One classification is based upon the types of thinking required to answer them:

   Recall – of facts, definitions, technical terms, ideas, experiences and feelings.

   Observation – of events, a person's reactions, a person's movements, of diagrams, pictures, video recordings etc. Questions asked may invite the respondent to make inferences.

   Thought – of simple deductions and inductions, problem-solving, evaluating and speculating.

   Recall, observation and thought questions often merge into one another. Some questions of these types may require brief specific answers: they are known as *closed* questions. Others may require extended answers: they are known as *open* questions.

3. The process of questioning involves various tactics, regardless of whether the questioner is trying to assess student understanding, develop thought or facilitate group and individual learning. Here are some guidelines you may wish to follow:

   ☆ Make the questions clear and brief and ask just one thing at a time. Avoid questions which require a long introduction or a subsequent explanation from you to make them comprehensible.

   ☆ Questions may be directed to specified individuals or to the group as a whole. Make it clear what you intend and do not address your questions to the ceiling or your fingernails!

   ☆ Pitch questions at the right level for the individual and the group, using words that they understand.

   ☆ Choose the right focus. 'Open' questions usually require broad, extended answers . . . ? 'Closed' questions on the other hand call for more narrowly focused answers. Open questions are also likely to promote dialogue whilst closed questions are useful for drawing out specific facts and ideas and for promoting deduction and logical thought.

   ☆ Be encouraging and sympathetic in the way you ask questions. Too threatening or direct a manner will raise people's levels of anxiety.

   ☆ Pause to give people time. They will need space both to think about the question you ask and to work out the answer they might give. When the question is difficult, it will help if you pause both before you ask it and afterwards. Learn to cope with 'thinking' silences.

   ☆ Distribute questions so that everyone has a chance to contribute. Avoid asking those people who always know the answer and take care how you handle those who are normally rather quiet.

   ☆ Sequence questions if you intend to ask more than one. Begin with easier ones and move towards those which require more thought. Ask questions in a logical pattern. Avoid random and arbitrary questions: you are not playing 'Trivial Pursuits'.

   ☆ Respond to people's answers with warmth and enthusiasm. If you are encouraging in the way you react, people will be more likely to contribute again. Use non-verbal as well as verbal signals – smile, nod and look at them.

- ☆ Take care how you respond when an answer is incorrect. Try not to put the person down, though you should not collude with wrong responses. Indicate the type of answer you are looking for or re-phrase the questions if you think it will help. Alternatively, you can ask a different (simpler/more direct/more relevant) question of the individual or perhaps invite comment from one or more other people. Find an opportunity later to value/praise the person who gave a wrong answer either for a subsequent correct answer or for some other positive piece of behaviour.

- ☆ If you find it difficult or impossible to understand a response to your question, be honest and ask the individual either to repeat it or explain it further. This will be of benefit to other course members, for they won't have understood either.

- ☆ Where it is appropriate, use the responses from individuals to construct a framework of ideas and understanding. You might make a note of the important responses on the board; this will encourage participation and 'ownership' of the material under scrutiny.

- ☆ Refer back to individual answers made earlier in the session – "As Mary said . . . As John told us". This will help knit the group together and boost students' egos.

- ☆ Prompt individuals who are struggling to answer a question. Give them more time by re-phrasing a question or gently suggesting the likely area of response. Where you are uncertain of how easily people will cope, ask them to discuss possible answers or solutions with a partner. That way the 'threat' of getting it wrong is shared. Use quick 'buzz' groups for difficult ideas.

KEY POINTS

- ☆ **WHAT IS A SIMPLE RECALL QUESTION FOR SOME PEOPLE MAY REQUIRE CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT FOR OTHERS.**

- ☆ **A QUESTION IS ONLY AS GOOD AS THE ANSWER IT ENGENDERS. AVOID ASKING TRIVIAL OR UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS; ASK ONLY THOSE WHICH CAN CARRY THE LEARNING/TEACHING PROCESS FORWARD**

7h. Some Questions to ask Yourself: Working with Groups

1. What steps can I take on the first session to begin the process of interaction between group members?

2. How could I organise the course, my teaching and all that it involves, to take into account the fact that some students:
   - want some responsibility in the group?
   - want to contribute to the 'well being' of the group?
   - want to contribute their knowledge and experience?
   - want to participate though they may lack confidence?
   - want to take a back seat?

3. What steps can I take to maintain the supportive climate of the group?

4. How can I ensure that everyone feels a member of the group and has a sense of belonging?

5. What clues and cues should I look for to find out:
   - about the social/affective life of the group?
   - if everyone who wishes to is making a contribution?
   - if anyone feels rejected, or insecure, or lacking in confidence?

6. At what point(s) should I take direct control? (and/or withdraw)

7. What room organisation and seating arrangement would be best for:
   - a talk by me with group participation.
   - a demonstration to the group.
   - working in sub-groups of 3 or 4.

8. What strategies can I use:
   - to cope with an over-talkative group member?
   - to stop aggressive or patronising remarks?
   - to encourage 'silent' students to participate?
   - to redirect the group back to the task in hand?
   - to call a halt to an interesting session when time becomes pressing?

9. How do I find out what people have learnt?

10. Can I think of one word which describes my group?
    Is it a description that pleases me? If not, what am I going to do about it?

7i. Additional Methods

What is it	*Value to Students*	*Points to Note*
PANEL		
A number of class members or specialist guests respond to questions or hold discussion in front of the class.	Different viewpoints are represented Stimulus for the class	Panel members should be good speakers Speakers need to be well briefed The class should be prepared Overtalkative panel members need to be kept in check
BRAINSTORMING		
The tutor asks for a list of ideas, proposals, suggestions in relation to a particular theme or problem. The aim is to produce as comprehensive a list as possible, which can then be analysed and used as the basis of a subsequent task or activity.	Every contribution is of equal value Stimulates ideas People are involved Draws on the experience of participants	Need to encourage people to produce ideas quickly Record responses quickly and accurately A time limit is necessary Avoid making judgements about individual contributions
CASE STUDY		
The details of an event or set of circumstances are presented to the group in written or visual form, for them to diagnose, analyse or solve a problem.	Brings real life situations into the classroom Enhances motivation	The case needs to be relevant or topical Should be well written and attractively presented Should be produced with specific learning objectives in mind May be followed by discussion and/or other tasks
ROLE PLAY/SIMULATION		
In these two related methods, students assume roles within simulated situations. During the role play students are involved by assuming hypothetical roles within specific situations.	Relevant to situations faced by students outside the classroom Students are encouraged to feel as well as think Helps with self-expression Can be fun	Students can become too emotionally involved and take on the characteristics of the role Participants need to be well briefed Monitor the exercise. Note the effect on different people Follow the exercise with a detailed debriefing

PROJECTS		
Tasks undertaken in small groups or by individuals. **Usually involves researching a topic for presentation in written or verbal form to the tutor and/or rest of the class.**	Gives initiative to students Discovery learning tends to enhance motivation Learning to work with/co-operate with others	Needs to be relevant Information required should be attainable Make frequent checks on progress Students will expect some form of assessment from the tutor
VISITS		
Students, either as individuals or in groups, visit an outside venue, relevant to a particular part of the course. Can involve interviewing people, finding information, observing a process.	Real life situations Encourages social relationships Enhances motivation	Needs to be well organised Students should be prepared in order to get the best from the visit Time should be allocated for de-briefing and a discussion of the visit itself Tutor should make a pre-visit 'visit'
WORK BETWEEN CLASSES		
Student carries out some form of activity between classes. This can take the form of a diary, reading or practising skills.	Maintains interest between classes Allows people to work at something in their own time and at their own pace	Students may have to be encouraged to work between classes Set the expectation that they will do this Make the task clear and clarify whether or not it is optional Provide the opportunity to discuss and share what has been done Resolve whether you are going to 'mark' it in some way – and when – and how?
DEBATE		
A formal discussion in which individuals or groups prepare a case related to a particular topic, before arguing it out against other individuals or groups.	Students are presented with both sides of an argument and can therefore make up their own minds as to the relative merits of a case	Make sure that both sides of a case are presented Avoid taking sides Manage the process fairly

DIARY		
Students keep a personal diary in relation to a specific theme or problem.	Helps develop self-awareness Helps students relate the course to the rest of their lives Provides evidence of one or more aspects of personal behaviour which then can be used for analysis	Diaries can be purely descriptive Students have to learn how to be analytical Avoid breaching privacy. Specify ownership
BUZZ GROUPS		
Pairs and trios discuss a particular question or topic very briefly.	Can provide a prelude to a formal presentation Valuable method of involving people Focuses attention on the topic in hand	Make sure the topic is clear Keep people to the task in hand Keep it short and to the point
SMALL GROUP TASKS		
Small groups carry out specific tasks or activities. Can be discussion type or involve physical activity.	Helps interpersonal cooperation People learn from each other Encourages people to share experience and knowledge	Write down task for each group as well as telling them Monitor each group Allow sufficient time for 'report back' if this is to be done Record the important points made
GAMES		
Large or small groups play an 'educational' game. May be commercially produced or 'home grown'.	Can be fun People learn from doing Encourages inductive and deductive thought Helps draw links between 'theory' and 'practice'	Ensure you know the rules and procedure Draw out the implications of the game for 'real life'

8. Some Learning Resources

People

Yourself	Other Tutors	AE Centre Heads/Principals
Your Students	School/College staff	Relations and friends

Written Resource Material

Books	Catalogues	Advertisements
Tutors' Manual	Photocopies	Promotional Literature
Reports	Notes	Publicity Material
Handouts	Periodicals/journals	Newspapers

Audio-visual Aids

Writing Boards	Flannel Boards	Video Recorder
Charts	Magnetic Board	Slide Projector
Posters	Tape Recorder	Film Projector
Diagrams	Record Player	Overhead Projector
Flip Charts	Radio	Epidiascope
Display Boards	Television	Microscope

Objects

The 'real thing'	Models	Samples
Specimens	Toys	A Volunteer

Events

Visits	Lectures	Sports/leisure Centres
Exhibitions	Social gatherings	Outside activities
Conferences	Field trips	Cinema/Theatre

9. Using Audio/Visual Aids

☆ People learn better if they can see as well as hear and vice versa. The judicious use of learning and teaching aids will benefit practically all talks and lectures.

☆ All aids need to be sufficiently clear and simple for everyone to see and understand. Make sure they are big enough, audible, good quality, etc.

☆ If figures, statistics or detailed information are important to your talk, write them down – on an OHP transparency, board or flip chart. If you want listeners to have a permanent record of something, give them a handout.

☆ The odd and unusual aid will gain attention and help people learn. Think about the whole variety of objects and visual ideas you have seen others use – in the classroom, on television, in the home, in the toy shop – and adapt them to your purpose.

KEY POINTS

☆ **PEOPLE'S LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT ARE ENHANCED BY AUDIO/VISUAL AIDS.**

☆ **TIME AND EFFORT SPENT ON PRODUCING GOOD AUDIO VISUAL AIDS WILL MAKE YOUR TEACHING (AND THEIR LEARNING) MORE EFFECTIVE AND MORE INTERESTING.**

10. Starting and Finishing

What a tutor does within the first 5-10 minutes critically affects what happens during the rest of the session. An interesting, lively and concise start is therefore essential, in order to:

- gain people's attention and create an interest in what is to follow
- help people settle down, relax and feel at ease
- set the expectation and tone for the remainder of the session
- identify what people are going to learn
- establish a climate conducive to learning

Many tutors also use this time to remind people of what was done at the last meeting. Some conduct general class business at the beginning of the session though this aspect might be better handled later in the session.

The last few minutes of a session are a crucial time for helping people consolidate what they have achieved, and for motivating them to continue with their learning. It is a time for them to say what they think about what has been done and for you to 'trail' the next session.

In planning the start and finish of a session, you need to give some attention to the following:

1. **Immediately before teaching**

☆ Get there early to check the room and arrange the furniture. Set out and check the equipment and get your other materials and handouts ready. By doing this in plenty of time, you can devote your whole attention to people as they arrive.

☆ Welcome individuals as they come into the room. People regard it as a compliment if you can address them by name: it does wonders for their self esteem. This is a time for socialising, but it is also a time for listening as well as talking. You should appear relaxed and friendly yet feel confident that you are 'ready to go'. This all derives from having things prepared and well organised.

2. **Making a start**

☆ Start on time. Announce that you are going to begin but do not start until you have everyone's attention. Your physical position in relation to members of the group is important in helping to gain their attention and communicating with them. Some tutors prefer to stand; others feel more comfortable sitting down. There are no hard and fast rules, but remember to make sure that everyone can see and hear you and that you in turn can see and hear each student.

☆ The choice of words and manner in which you begin are also important. Sound friendly and welcoming, yet give the impression of being confident and enthusiastic.

☆ Effective communication is the key to a good start. Maintain direct eye contact with people and speak clearly and at the right pace. A major skill is to use a natural, fluid eye movement so that you look at each member of the class.

☆ After the initial phase, go on to describe what you hope to do, summarising briefly what you intend to cover. Invite comment and be prepared to respond.

☆ Whatever you say, make sure it is colourful and lively. Use an aid, a personal anecdote, a story from a student to focus people's attention and provide a point of interest. A teacher must 'sell' his or her projected topic by making it appear interesting. An imaginative, brisk opening helps create interest and motivate people.

3. **Finishing**

☆ End on time. Allow 3-5 minutes for closure. How you summarise what has been covered is up to you, but make sure you do. Describe briefly what you hope to be doing at the next session so that people will be keen to carry on and return.

☆ Remind them of anything they have to do or bring for next time. Say you think the session will be interesting, rewarding and fun. Share your enthusiasm with them. Ask for comment about what they think has been achieved during the session. Value their responses and let it be seen that you will give each one due consideration. Finally tell them you are looking forward to seeing them again and thank them for their interest and attendance.

4. **Immediately after finishing**

☆ Don't pack up and leave as soon as you have finished, as you may give the impression of not caring. Stay in the room and allow the group to leave first. Be ready to talk to anyone who stays behind. Some may want to confide in you or be reassured they can cope; a few may want help and advice, and one or two may well be unable to attend the next time and want to tell

you why. Remaining behind provides you with the opportunity to make contact with individuals, and to receive feedback about how the class is going and how people are progressing.

☆ Return the room to its original state. Finally, once everyone has left, think about the session. How did it go? What worked well? What didn't? Did you achieve what you set out to? What did the students achieve? Any problems to note for the next session? Get into the habit of reviewing each session and the general progress of the group after every meeting.

KEY POINTS

☆ **WHAT YOU DO AND SAY BEFORE YOU BEGIN WILL IN PART DETERMINE HOW PEOPLE WILL RESPOND TO YOU AND TO EACH OTHER LATER IN THE SESSION.**

☆ **HOW YOU END A SESSION AND TALK WITH PEOPLE AFTERWARDS CAN HAVE A POWERFUL EFFECT ON THEIR PRESENT FEELINGS AND ON THEIR SUBSEQUENT ATTENDANCE. IT WILL ALSO MOTIVATE THEM TO LEARN AND WILL HELP THEM ACHIEVE MORE.**

11. Evaluation

In recent years there has been a strong move in education generally and in adult education in particular towards the idea of course evaluation. It is no longer sufficient for teachers to believe that "because people turn up every week what I'm doing is OK and the course must be all right". All tutors have a duty to ensure that students receive a good return for the money, time and effort they put into their learning.

1. Evaluation in education means describing something in appropriate terms, and then judging how acceptable or suitable that something is. The 'something' may be any aspect of education but it is typically (a) a total programme such as that offered by a college or adult institute or (b) a course or session. In the United Kingdom, the word 'assessment' is usually used when describing and judging an individual – student or teacher, though the terms 'evaluation' and 'assessment' are often used interchangeably. But whichever word is used, the concept of evaluation has to do with making some judgement about the work of a teaching/learning event, and questions do need to be asked, namely: Is what is being done supposed to be done? Is it being done effectively and efficiently? Are the participants achieving something of value?

2. In terms of a course for adults, evaluation will establish whether:

   - the course aims and objectives have been achieved.
   - the students' needs and wants have been met.
   - the course was 'value for money' and 'value for the time spent'.
   - the planning, organisation and management were satisfactory.
   - the teacher exemplified good practice.
   - feedback about 'this' course may be used to plan and improve the 'next' course.

   All adult teachers will find answers to such questions of considerable benefit to themselves and to the people they teach; you have a duty to ensure that your course is as 'acceptable' and 'suitable' as possible for all concerned.

11a Course Evaluation

One way that course evaluation can be carried out is for you to invite an outsider to act as observer/evaluator of one of your sessions. Together you agree on a procedure for the visit and a set of criteria before the session begins. The visitor subsequently discusses his or her observations and assessment with you and even perhaps with the students. Considerable benefit has been derived from this sort of exercise, especially where tutors visit each other. Not only can you give valuable feedback to your colleague but you can also pick up new ideas to use in your own course.

There are however a variety of other methods which you can use to evaluate your own course. Ideally, you should find out what the participants themselves think about the course, about the group and about you as their tutor. The problem is that if you ask them too directly they will only tell you about the good aspects. Therefore you might employ some or all of the following suggestions:

☆ Get into the habit of listening and talking to individuals right from the start of the course. If you arrive at each session sufficiently early you can get everything ready and then be free to socialise with people as they come in. You can listen to what they say to you and to each other. If you end promptly you will have time to chat and to listen, perhaps following up what you have observed and heard during the session. In this way you can find out if they are motivated, interested, hard-working, achieving, approving . . . and if something is wrong you can identify what it is and correct it.

☆ Ask them during the course what things they would like modified. You might do this by getting them into small groups with each group thinking about one of the components. You could, for example, suggest they identify what they like doing, or what they feel benefits them, or what they are less keen on. If you also ask them to identify ways that the course might be modified to suit *them*, you will get suggestions which they won't feel are criticisms of you. It is important that you should not expose individuals and ask them to criticise directly. Let them work with one or more partners. It is also important, once you know how they feel about certain things, to introduce modifications into the course if you judge them suitable. If how-

ever you think an idea is inappropriate tell them so and explain why. Remember, it is as much their course as it is yours and they have as much stake in it as you.

☆ Give them an opportunity to complete some form of (anonymous?) report or questionnaire towards the end of the course. Remember, however, that if you intend to ask specific questions about particular things there is little point in seeking their views on aspects which you either can't or won't change.

☆ You might choose to ask more general questions to get a flavour of what they think about the course. This is perfectly acceptable but you may find it more difficult to analyse their responses in terms of what you should modify for 'next time'. Some items you could include are:

- The most useful/least useful part of the course for me was . . . because
- If I could change the course, I would . . . because
- The thing I liked best about coming on the course was . . . because
- I should also like to say that . . .

☆ Alternatively you could ask people to make any comments they might wish:

"Make a note below of anything you would like to say about the course. You might want to say something about what we did or whether you enjoyed the course, ways you think it could be improved and how people themselves could contribute to making it more successful. Please write anything that you think I should know especially if it will help me plan the next course. Thank you for your help."

☆ Some teachers of adults prefer to carry out course evaluations in the final session. They use a variety of ways to elicit people's judgements – buzz groups, brainstorming, small groups reporting back, open discussion and so on. However, these procedures may be very threatening to individual members of the course, not least the tutor!

Whatever method you use, try to remain objective. When people are critical in any way it may be difficult for you not to take it personally. At the same time, try not to seize on 'praise' at the expense of constructive criticism. Sit there and take it all, and do not defend your actions! Accept it positively and capitalise on what they have to tell you to the benefit of the next group.

11b Self-Evaluation

1. A further way of carrying out an evaluation is for you to complete your own self-evaluation. This will analyse your teaching as well as evaluate the course in a structured and systematic way.

2. Self-evaluation can be carried out at a number of levels. You can make judgements about what you are doing in the session as you are actually doing it, and once it has been completed. In addition, you can analyse your work and achievement for the whole course. Such self-evaluation might best be carried out by asking yourself specific questions about the material you taught, the group members, the methods you used, the environment, the resources and so on.

   Some examples of appropriate questions are given below but the questions themselves are less important than the habit of thinking about your work as a teacher of adults and modifying what you do as a result.

11c Some Self-Evaluation Questions: Myself as Tutor

1. Have I clearly decided what the objectives of each part of each session are?
2. Do my students know what they are trying to achieve at any given point?
3. Who sets the standards they are expected to reach? When I do it, is it clear to them what they have do do?
4. Have I re-thought the order and structure of the material I present them to work with? Does it meet their needs and interests?
5. Do I help them to relate the material to real life experience?
6. Do I treat each person as an individual adult? How well do I know them? Do I know their names . . . and do I use them?
7. Does what I do in the group cater for the range of their abilities and experience? Is anyone left out and/or are the most able bored?
8. Does everyone get the opportunity to participate . . . and express their opinions . . . and do I respond appropriately, especially if they get it a bit wrong . . . or if they make a good point?
9. Do I cope effectively (and sympathetically) with 'awkward' students?
10. Do I know what people's learning difficulties are . . . and do I act accordingly?
11. Are people generally apathetic, obstructive, uncertain and dependant . . . or are they alert, responsible, confident and initiating? Are they motivated and hard working, or uninterested and lazy?
12. Can I diagnose and assess their difficulties and, once knowing them, can I help individuals in a sympathetic and constructive way?
13. Do I ensure that everyone is actively engaged in what we are doing?
14. Do I help the more reticent to join in . . . and moderate the more boisterous?
15. Do I comment upon what they do – praising the successful and encouraging the less able?
16. When I teach them as a group, do I prepare adequately . . . use appropriate aids . . . involve them . . . relate new ideas to existing ones . . . use their experience?
17. Do I make it quite clear what the task is when they work in small groups . . . and do I take account of and value each small group's work without boring the others?
18. Do I consider using a range of methods to introduce new, relevant experiences to the group?
19. Am I there first . . . and do I leave last?
20. Do I make sufficient effort to arrange the seating, lighting, heating and so on to further the work and social life of the group?
21. Do I make sufficient use of the resources available?
22. Do I know enough about my subject to teach it adequately?
23. Do I practise what I preach . . . am I a good model?
24. Do I do all I can to help each person as an individual?
25. When did I last think about my subject . . . my teaching . . . and my students?

12 Policy and Administration

There is a whole range of issues which need to be considered above and beyond the actual business of learning and teaching. Time and attention must be given to administration and management for they vitally effect the efficiency and effectiveness of any learning event. Where such issues are adequately dealt with, the teacher has the time and confidence to welcome, talk to and respond to individual course members at all stages of a session. The effects upon student motivation and learning where a course is poorly planned, inadequately managed and badly resourced are soon evident. The following items are a selection of the more important factors which need to be taken into account. There are others, some of which may be peculiar to your course and its particular circumstance. The important point, however, is that you should ensure that you have anticipated everything that can reasonably be anticipated.

Publicity and marketing
Recruitment of potential participants
Selection of course members
Pre-course communication
Group size
Expressed needs of participants
Location
Timing
Accommodation
Resources – technical/hardware/other
Written course materials
Links with other agencies
Certification/attendance
Individual 'homework' and activities
Budget and fees
Course register
Follow-up of people who miss a session
Counselling and individual support
Post-course follow-up
Post-course 'get-together'

KEY POINTS

- ☆ **HOWEVER UNREASONABLE IT MIGHT SEEM AT TIMES, YOU ARE SEEN AS FINALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENS IN THE COURSE. THEREFORE DON'T TRUST ANYONE: DO IT YOURSELF.**
- ☆ **WHERE SOMETHING IS A SUCCESS, ACCEPT THE PRAISE GRACEFULLY. MAKE SURE THAT OTHERS KNOW WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE AND THE FACT THAT IT WAS WORTHWHILE. SEND YOUR PUBLICITY TO INTERESTED PARTIES AND SEND THEM A NOTE THAT IT WENT WELL TOO.**

AND FINALLY:

This handbook on Adult Learning and Adult Teaching contains a great deal of material about the ideas that underpin good adult education theory and practice. As a summary and conclusion these final three items should be read in sequence:

13. Planning a Session

Here are some suggestions to help you plan for and run an individual session:

1. **Well before the session**

- ☆ Identify the topics and activities to be covered in each component or section of your course outline.
- ☆ Identify and state the objectives of each component i.e. what should people be able to do, or think, or say, by the end of the session?
- ☆ Assess people's existing knowledge and experience.
- ☆ Decide how you will check on the effectiveness of learning as the session progresses and at its end.
- ☆ Choose the teaching and learning methods to be used and the resources that you will need.
- ☆ Prepare some lesson notes in a form you can refer to later.
- ☆ Work out timings for the session.
- ☆ Prepare the teaching aids and handouts you will need.

2. **Immediately before the Session**

- ☆ Check the equipment. (Is it there? Is it working? Do you know how to use it?)
- ☆ Check the room layout, ventilation and lighting. Change it until it's right!
- ☆ Have an alternative strategy to hand in case something goes wrong.

3. **During the Session**

- ☆ Start promptly. Give a welcome, even to the late-comers.

Introduction: Deal with administrative matters and announcements either now or at a 'natural break' between components.

Recap on the previous session and invite observations and follow-up from the group.

Explain the objectives of the session and what you hope you and they will achieve.

- ☆ Development: Organise the material in a clear sequence and describe the structure of it before you begin. With practical work, keep to the sequence the group is used to.

Maintain interest by varying the activities.

Create opportunities for people to use their knowledge and practise their skills.

Create opportunities for people to reveal what they know and what they have learned.

Allow for the possibility of variation in the session, regardless of what you have planned. Allow for the fact that it may take a new direction.

- ☆ Conclusion: Summarise what has been done and achieved. This will act as a learning reinforcement and provide encouragement.

Suggest the sorts of tasks and activities that might be pursued in subsequent sessions and/or 'at home'.

Tidy the room, clean the board and unplug any electrical leads.

Finish promptly, say 'Goodbye' and 'Thanks for attending'.

4. **After the Session**

- ☆ Evaluate the session, asking yourself questions about what was successful and what was not, and what the group and individuals actually achieved.
- ☆ Make notes of what could and should be changed for next time.

14. Some Questions to Ask Yourself: Some Practical Points

1. Do I create a friendly, informal and welcoming atmosphere? And do I smile enough?

2. Can I remember people's names and do I use them to recognise people as individuals?

3. Do I listen to what people say – to me and to each other – so that I can find out about them as individuals?

4. Have I time for people before, during and after the session, especially those who don't like to speak in front of others, and the few who may want to discuss matters in private?

5. Do I use appreciation as a reward: "That's good", "I like that"?

6. Do I demonstrate an interest in people's ideas and in the things that they want to talk about?

7. Do I give people credit for their contributions to the group? Do I value what they offer, yet sensitively challenge their errors or misapprehensions where necessary?

8. Do I admit, if I don't know, that I don't know? . . . and not feel unduly embarrassed about it?

9. Am I fair in allocating my time and attention to individuals?

10. Do I continually ask for, and use, people's experience and expertise?

11. Do I invariably get there early. Do I recognise that as far as students are concerned, I am responsible for what goes on, and how, and why, and where?

12. Do I make the physical surroundings as attractive and congenial as I can?

13. Do I avoid sarcasm, ridicule and social disapproval, knowing that of all things, people resent being 'put down' like children?

14. Do I socialise on equal terms? Do I join my students at coffee breaks and am I available to them before and after the session?

15. Do I start and finish punctually?

16. Do I present material step by step in short units, and relate new material to what is already known?

17. Do I repeat new or difficult ideas and processes? Do I summarise often and check that my students are learning?

18. Do I use audio/visual aids when and where they can aid people's learning?

19. Do I have frequent changes of activities during a session and have an interval if that is what course members want?

20. Do I always demonstrate enthusiasm for my subject, my teaching and for course participants?

21. Do I show a willingness to negotiate with my students about the course and the procedure to be adopted?

22. Do I follow-up any absences sensitively? Do I remember to send a note or a postcard or to make a brief 'phone call?

23. Do I ensure that the group and each individual leave with a spirit of having accomplished something and a desire to learn more?

24. Can I accept the variety of people and personalities that come to my sessions and do I try to adjust my behaviour to suit their needs?

25. Do I always remember that in the last analysis it is the students' learning and achievement that are important, not my teaching and performance?

15. The Ten Commandments

1. **THE COURSE, AND YOU, SHOULD BE A GOOD MODEL FOR THEM TO FOLLOW.**

2. **DON'T TRUST ANYONE ELSE WITH ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS.**

3. **MAKE EVERYTHING LOOK GOOD.**

4. **GET THE POLITICS RIGHT.**

5. **EXPECT AND ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO WORK.**

6. **KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE.**

7. **GET THE ENVIRONMENT RIGHT.**

8. **HAVE TIME FOR PEOPLE.**

9. **ENJOY IT.**

10. **TREAT COURSE MEMBERS AS ADULTS.**

A companion series of trainers' notes are also available to accompany this publication. They are presented in a number of discrete loose leaved packs, covering the major topics identified in this, the tutor's handbook.

Each pack contains background notes and suggestions for training course groups at induction level, at stage 1 (ACSET and City and Guilds) and for sections of stage 2 courses. Master copies for the production of overhead transparencies are provided, together with 'ready to print' handout sheets for group and individual tasks.

A list of the topics currently available may be had from the Publications Unit and individual packs may be purchased separately. A limited copyright waiver is included.

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